

The Principles of Communism

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What is Communism?

Communism is the theory which seeks to understand certain conditions that will liberate the *proletariat*.

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What is the proletariat?

The *proletariat* is the class of people whose income comes purely from selling their labour; whose survival depends entirely on the demand for labour, and so depends entirely on the changing states and decisions of business. The *proletariat*, or the class of *proletarians*, is, in a word, the working class of the modern world.

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So the proletariat has not always existed?

No. There have always been poor and working classes; and the working class have mostly been poor. But there have not always been workers and poor people living under the current economic conditions; in other words, there have not always been *proletarians*, any more than there has always been free market *capitalism*.

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Where did the proletariat come from?

The *Proletariat* arose from the Industrial Revolution, which took place in England in the last half of the 18th century, and then spread across most of the world.

The Industrial Revolution began with the discovery of the steam engine, various spinning machines, the mechanical loom, and a whole series of other mechanical devices. These machines, which were very expensive and thus could only be bought by big *capitalists*, entirely altered the way things were produced and displaced the former workers, because the machines turned out cheaper and better commodities than the workers could produce with their inefficient spinning wheels and handlooms. The machines delivered industry wholly into the hands of the big *capitalists* and rendered the meagre *property*¹ of the workers (tools, looms, etc.) entirely worthless. The result was that the *capitalists* soon had everything in their hands and nothing remained to the workers. This marked the introduction of the factory system into the textile industry.

Once the introduction of machinery and the factory system had begun, this system spread quickly to all other branches of industry, especially cloth- and book-printing, pottery, and the metal industries.

Labour was more and more divided among the individual workers so that the worker who had previously done a complete piece of work now did only a part of that piece. This

¹ When *Communists* refer to *property*, we are specifically referring to things like land, buildings, machinery & equipment, anything that is used to generate economic value or political power, not simply anything a person owns.

division of labour made it possible to produce things faster and cheaper. It reduced the activity of the individual worker to simple, endlessly repeated mechanical motions which could be performed not only as well but much better by a machine. In this way, all these industries fell, one after another, under the dominance of steam, machinery, and the factory system, just as spinning and weaving had already done.

But at the same time, they also fell into the hands of big *capitalists*, and their workers were deprived of whatever independence remained to them. Gradually, not only genuine manufacture but also handicrafts came within the province of the factory system as big *capitalists* increasingly displaced the small master craftsmen by setting up huge workshops, which saved many expenses and permitted an elaborate division of labour.

This is why nearly all kinds of labour are now performed in factories – and, in nearly all branches of work, handicrafts and manufacture have been superseded. This process has, to an ever greater degree, ruined the old middle class, especially the small handicraftsmen; it has entirely transformed the condition of the workers; and two new classes have been created which are gradually swallowing up all the others. These are:

(i) The class of big *capitalists*, who, in nearly all countries, are already in almost exclusive possession of everything the people need to survive and of the instruments (machines, factories) and materials required for the production of necessities. This is the *bourgeois* class, or the *bourgeoisie*.

(ii) The class of the wholly *propertyless*, who are obliged to sell their labour to the *bourgeoisie* in order to get, in exchange, the necessities for survival. This is called the class of *proletarians*, or the *proletariat*.

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How does this sale of the proletarians' labour to the bourgeoisie work?

Labour is a commodity, like any other, and its price is therefore determined by exactly the same laws that apply to other commodities. In a regime of big industry or of free competition – as we shall see, the two come to the same thing – the price of a commodity is, on average, always equal to its cost of production. Hence, the price of labour is also equal to the cost of production of labour.

But, the costs of production of labour consist of exactly the minimum quantity of necessities for survival to enable the worker to continue working, and to prevent the working class from dying out. The worker will therefore get no more for their labour than is necessary for this purpose; the price of labour, or the wage, will, in other words, be the lowest, the minimum, required for the maintenance of life.

However, since business is sometimes better and sometimes worse, it follows that the worker sometimes gets more and sometimes gets less for their commodities. But, again, just as the industrialist, on the average of good times and bad, gets no more and no less for their commodities than what they cost, similarly on the average the worker gets no more and no less than their minimum.

The stronger big industry's control of all branches of production, the more strictly this economic law of wages operates.

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What working classes were there before the Industrial Revolution?

The working classes have always lived in different circumstances and had different relations to the owning and ruling classes.

In antiquity, and in the European colonies of the 16th-19th centuries, the workers were the *slaves* of the owners.

In the Middle Ages, they were the *serfs* of the land-owning nobility. In the Middle Ages, and indeed right up to the Industrial Revolution, there were also journeymen in the cities who worked in the service of *petty bourgeois*² masters. Gradually, as manufacture developed, these journeymen became manufacturing workers who were even then employed by larger *capitalists*.

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How are proletarians different to slaves?

The *slave* is sold once and for all; the *proletarian* must sell themselves daily and hourly.

Individual *slaves* were owned by one master, who made sure they survived – however miserably – because the master personally benefitted. The individual *proletarian*, is essentially the *property* of the entire *bourgeois* class, which buys their labour only when someone needs it, and so has no guarantee of survival. Survival is only guaranteed to the *proletarian* class as a whole.

The *slave* does not have to compete for work, while the *proletarian* does.

The *slave* counts as a thing, not as a member of society. Thus, the *slave* can have a better existence than the *proletarian*, while the *proletarian* belongs to a higher stage of social development and stands on a higher social level than the *slave*; that is to say, the *proletarian* has a more complex social relation to society as a whole, a more developed class position.

A *slave* is freed when slavery is abolished, which allows them to become a *proletarian*; the *proletarian* can be freed only by abolishing private ownership of the means of production (what *Communists* call “private *property*”) as a whole.

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How are proletarians different to serfs?

The *serf* possesses and uses an instrument of production, a piece of land, and in exchange they give up a part of their product or part of the services of their labour.

The *proletarian* works with the instruments of production of another, for the account of this other, in exchange for a part of the product.

The *serf* gives up, the *proletarian* receives. The *serf* has a guarantee of survival, the *proletarian* does not. The *serf* does not have to compete for work, the *proletarian* does.

² The *petty bourgeoisie*, also written as *petit-bourgeoisie*, are those workers who own *property* which provides some amount of profit, but not enough to live without engaging in their own work alongside it, for example small shop owners, farm owners who work their land, independent artists of all mediums (intellectual *property* being a form of *property* like any other), or workers who maintain stock investments. This class will inevitably shrink and be wiped out as big *capitalists* dominate all areas of the economy to ever greater degrees, leading to *proletarianisation* – some may therefore rally behind the *proletariat*, while others will align themselves with *bourgeois* interests in the hopes of maintaining their position and the *property* ownership it relies upon.

The *serf* liberates themselves in one of three ways: either they run away to the city and become a handicraftsman; or, instead of products and services, they give money to their lord and become a free tenant; or they overthrow their feudal lord and become a *property* owner themselves. In short, they either get into the owning class and enter into competition, or they are stripped of their *property* and they become a *proletarian*. The *proletarian* liberates themselves by abolishing competition, private *property*, and all class differences.

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How are proletarians different to handicraftsmen?

In contrast to the *proletarian*, the so-called *handicraftsman*, as they existed through the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, is a *proletarian* at most temporarily. Their goal is to acquire *capital* themselves with which to exploit other workers. They could initially achieve this goal in areas of work where the introduction of factory-style methods and fierce competition had not yet taken hold, but as soon as the factory system has been introduced into the crafts and competition flourishes fully, this possibility dwindles away and the *handicraftsman* becomes more and more a *proletarian*. The *handicraftsman* therefore frees themselves by becoming either *bourgeois* or entering the middle class in general, or becoming a *proletarian* because of competition (as was more often the case). In which case they can free themselves by joining the *proletarian* movement, i.e., the more or less *communist* movement.

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How are proletarians different to manufacturing workers?

The *manufacturing worker* of the 16th to the 18th centuries usually still had an instrument of production in their own possession – their loom, the family spinning wheel, a little plot of land which they cultivated in their spare time. The *proletarian* has none of these things.

The *manufacturing worker* almost always lives in the countryside and in a more or less patriarchal relation to their landlord or employer; the *proletarian* lives, for the most part, in the city and their relation to their employer is purely a cash relation.

The *manufacturing worker* is torn out of their patriarchal relation by big industry, loses whatever *property* they still have, and in this way becomes a *proletarian*.

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What were the immediate consequences of the Industrial Revolution, and of the division of society into bourgeoisie and proletariat?

First, the lower and lower prices of industrial products brought about by machine labour totally destroyed, in all countries of the world, the old system of manufacture or industry based upon hand labour.

In this way, many countries and societies in the global south and east, whose industry had been based on manufacture, were violently entangled with the *capitalism* of western Europe. They bought the cheaper commodities of the English and allowed their own manufacturing workers to be ruined. Countries whose economic & political systems had not drastically changed for thousands of years – for example, India and China – were thoroughly revolutionized.

We have come to the point where a new machine invented in England deprives millions of Chinese workers of their livelihood within a year's time.

In this way, big industry has brought all the people of the Earth into contact with each other, has merged all local markets into one world market, has spread technological progress everywhere and has thus ensured that whatever happens in heavily industrialised Western countries will have repercussions in all other countries.

It follows that if the workers in England or France now liberate themselves, this must set off revolution in all other countries – revolutions which, sooner or later, must accomplish the liberation of their respective working class.

Second, wherever big industries displaced manufacture, the *bourgeoisie* developed in wealth and power to the utmost and made itself the ruling class of the country. The result was that wherever this happened, the *bourgeoisie* took political power into its own hands and displaced the previous ruling classes, the aristocracy, the guildmasters, and their representative, the absolute monarchy.

The *bourgeoisie* annihilated the power of the aristocracy, the nobility, by abolishing the entailment of estates – in other words, by making landed *property* subject to purchase and sale, and by doing away with the special privileges of the nobility. It destroyed the power of the guildmasters by abolishing guilds and handicraft privileges. In their place, it put competition – that is, a state of society in which everyone has the right to enter into any branch of industry, the only obstacle being a lack of the necessary starting funds and *property* (what *Communists* call *capital*), and in which the actions and direction of industry are determined solely by what will best grow the *capital* of its owners.

The introduction of free competition is thus public declaration that from now on the members of society are unequal only to the extent that their *capitals* are unequal, that *capital* is the decisive power, and that therefore the *capitalists*, the *bourgeoisie*, have become the ruling class in society.

Free competition is necessary for the establishment of big industry, because it is the only condition of society in which big industry can make its way.

Having destroyed the social power of the nobility and the guildmasters, the *bourgeois* also destroyed their political power. Having raised itself to the actual position of ruling class in society, it proclaims itself to also be the dominant political class. It does this through the introduction of the representative system which rests on *bourgeois* equality before the law and the recognition of free competition, and in European countries takes the form of constitutional monarchy or parliamentary republic. These systems of government inherently serve the *bourgeoisie*, because only those with sufficient *capital* – the *bourgeoisie* – are able to campaign and win elections, or pass laws, and will act in their own interests, while restrictions on the right to vote such as requiring ID or a stable address ensure those that cannot afford such things cannot have any involvement at all in these so-called democratic systems. This is why *Communists* label these governments *dictatorships of the bourgeoisie* – regardless of the specific party or leader in charge, and regardless of the specific forms their electoral processes take or how “democratic” they appear, the *bourgeoisie* as a class will always hold power; when *Communists* speak of overthrowing these to build a *dictatorship of the proletariat*, we are not talking about “dictatorship” as the word is commonly used, but a system of government in which the *proletariat* will always hold power and which serves *proletarian* interests.

Third, everywhere the *proletariat* develops in step with the *bourgeoisie*. In proportion, as the *bourgeoisie* grows in wealth, the *proletariat* grows in numbers. For, since the *proletarians* can be employed only by *capital*, and since *capital* grows only by employing labour, it follows that the growth of the *proletariat* proceeds at precisely the same pace as the growth of *capital*.

Simultaneously, this process draws members of the *bourgeoisie* and *proletarians* together into large cities where industry can be carried on most profitably, and by thus throwing everyone into one place it gives the *proletarians* a consciousness of their own strength.

Moreover, the further this process advances, the more new labour-saving machines are invented, the greater the pressure exercised by big industry on wages, which, as we have seen, sink to their minimum and so render the condition of the *proletariat* increasingly unbearable. The growing dissatisfaction of the *proletariat* thus joins with its rising power to prepare a *proletarian* social revolution.

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What were the further consequences of the Industrial Revolution?

With the creation of the steam engine, and other machines, big industry created the means of endlessly expanding industrial production, speeding it up, and cutting its costs. With production thus drastically increasing, the free competition of businesses – which is necessarily bound up with big industry – took on the most extreme forms; a multitude of *capitalists* invaded industry, and, in a short while, more was produced than was needed.

As a consequence, finished commodities could not be sold, and a so-called commercial crisis broke out. Factories had to be closed, their owners went bankrupt, and the workers were without bread. Deepest misery reigned everywhere, despite an abundance of goods.

After a time, the superfluous products were sold, the factories began to operate again, wages rose, and gradually business got better than ever.

But it was not long before too many commodities were again produced and a new crisis broke out, only to follow the same course as before.

Ever since the beginning of the 19th century, the condition of industry has constantly fluctuated between periods of prosperity and periods of crisis; nearly every decade or two, a fresh crisis has come about, always with the greatest hardship for workers, and always accompanied by general discontent and disillusionment with the whole existing order of things.

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What can we learn from these periodic commercial crises?

First:

- That although big industry in its earliest stage created free competition, it has now outgrown free competition;
- that, for big industry, competition and generally the individualistic organisation of production have become a shackle which it must – and will – shatter;
- that, so long as big industry remains on its present footing, it can be maintained only at the cost of general chaos every decade or so, each time threatening the

whole world and not only plunging the *proletarians* into misery but also ruining large sections of the *bourgeoisie*;

- therefore, either big industry must itself be given up, which is an absolute impossibility, or it makes an entirely new organisation of society unavoidably necessary, in which production is no longer directed by mutually competing individual industrialists but rather by the whole society operating according to a definite plan and taking account of the needs of all.

Second: That big industry, and the limitless expansion of production which it makes possible, bring within the range of feasibility a social order in which so much is produced that every member of society will be in a position to exercise and develop all their capabilities and faculties in complete freedom.

It thus appears that the very qualities of big industry which, in our present-day society, produce misery and crises are those which, in a different form of society, will abolish this misery and these catastrophic depressions.

We see with the greatest clarity:

1. That all these evils are from now on to be ascribed solely to a social order which no longer corresponds to the requirements of the real situation; and
2. That it is possible, through a new social order, to do away with these evils altogether.

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What will this new social order have to be like?

Above all, it will have to take the control of industry and of all branches of production out of the hands of mutually competing individuals, and instead institute a system in which all these branches of production are operated by society as a whole – that is, for the common good, according to a common plan, and with the participation of all members of society.

It will, in other words, abolish competition and replace it with association.

Moreover, since the management of industry by individuals necessarily implies private *property*, and since competition is in reality merely the way control of industry by private *property* owners expresses itself, it follows that private *property* cannot be separated from competition and the individual management of industry. Private *property* must, therefore, be abolished and in its place must come the common utilization of all instruments of production and the distribution of all products according to common agreement – in a word, what is called the communal ownership of goods.

In fact, the abolition of private *property* is, doubtless, the shortest and most significant way to characterise the revolution in the whole social order which has been made necessary by the development of industry – and for this reason it is rightly advanced by *communists* as their main demand.

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Was the abolition of private property not possible at an earlier time?

No. Every change in the social order, every revolution in *property* relations, is the necessary consequence of the creation of new forces of production which no longer fit into the old *property* relations.

Private *property* has not always existed.

When, towards the end of the Middle Ages, the new mode of production of manufacture came about, which could not work under feudalism and thus had outgrown the old *property* relations, the new *property* form of *private property* was created. And for manufacture and the earliest stage of development of big industry, private *property* was the only possible *property* form; the social order based on it was the only possible social order.

As long as it is impossible to produce so much that there is enough for all, with more left over for expanding the social *capital* and extending the forces of production – so long as this is not possible, there must always be a ruling class directing the use of society's productive forces, and a poor, oppressed class. How these classes are constituted depends on the stage of development.

The agrarian Middle Ages give us the baron and the *serf*; the cities of the later Middle Ages show us the guildmaster and the journeyman and the day labourer; the 17th century has its manufacturing workers; the 19th and beyond has big factory owners and *proletarians*.

It is clear that, up to now, the forces of production have never been developed to the point where enough could be developed for all, and that private *property* has become a restriction and a barrier in relation to the further development of the forces of production.

Now, however, the development of big industry has ushered in a new period. *Capital* and the forces of production have been expanded to an unprecedented extent, and the means are at hand to multiply them without limit in the near future. Moreover, the forces of production have been concentrated in the hands of a few *bourgeois*, while the great mass of the people are more and more falling into the *proletariat*, their situation becoming more wretched and intolerable in proportion to the increase of wealth of the *bourgeoisie*. And finally, these mighty and easily extended forces of production have outgrown private *property* and the *bourgeoisie* so much that they threaten at any moment to unleash the most violent disturbances of the social order. Now, under these conditions, the abolition of private *property* has become not only possible but absolutely necessary.

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Will the peaceful abolition of private property be possible?

It would be desirable if this could happen, and the *communists* would certainly be the last to oppose it. *Communists* know only too well that all conspiracies are not only useless, but even harmful. They know all too well that revolutions are not made intentionally and arbitrarily, but that, everywhere and always, they have been the necessary consequence of conditions which were wholly independent of the will and direction of individual parties and entire classes – a revolutionary situation requires, in short, that the ruling class experience a crisis so great that their rule cannot maintain itself as it has done and must undergo some great change, that the suffering of the oppressed class grow to such a degree that life is truly untenable, and crucially that the people are driven to organised political action in sufficient numbers to force a change in this period of instability.

But they also see that the development of the *proletariat* in nearly all countries has been violently suppressed, and that in this way the opponents of *communism* have been working toward a revolution with all their strength. If the oppressed *proletariat* is finally

driven to revolution, then we *communists* will defend the interests of the *proletarians* with deeds as we now defend them with words.

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Will it be possible for private property to be abolished instantly?

No, no more than existing forces of production can instantly be multiplied to the extent necessary to create a communal society.

In all probability, the *proletarian* revolution will transform existing society gradually and will be able to abolish private *property* only when the means of production are available in sufficient quantity.

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What will be the course of this revolution?

Above all, it will establish a democratic constitution, and through this, the direct or indirect dominance of the *proletariat*, depending on how strong the *proletariat* are in the country.

Democracy would be wholly worthless to the *proletariat* if it were not immediately used to put through measures directed against private *property* and ensuring the livelihood of the *proletariat*. The main measures, emerging as the necessary result of existing relations, are the following:

1. Limitation of private *property* through progressive taxation, heavy inheritance taxes, abolition of inheritance through collateral lines (brothers, nephews, etc.) forced loans, etc.
2. Gradual expropriation of landowners, industrialists, railroad magnates and shipowners, tech entrepreneurs, and the like – partly through competition by state industry, partly directly through compensation in the form of bonds.
3. Confiscation of the *property* of all who seek to disrupt these measures by means such as theft, sabotage or rebellion – for example, Cuba's fascist president Fulgencio Batista and his allies who fled the revolution with much of the contents of the country's treasury, or the Tsarist loyalists who fought against the *Communist* government in the Russian Civil War.
4. Organisation of labour or employment of *proletarians* on publicly owned land, in factories and workshops, with competition among the workers being abolished and with the factory owners, in so far as they still exist, being obliged to pay the same high wages as those paid by the state.
5. An equal obligation on all able-bodied/minded members of society to work until such time as private *property* has been completely abolished. Formation of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
6. Centralization of money and credit in the hands of the state through a national bank with state *capital*, and the suppression of all private banks and bankers.
7. Increase in the number of national factories, workshops, railroads, ships; bringing new lands into cultivation and improvement of land already under cultivation – all in proportion to the growth of the *capital* and labour force at the disposal of the nation.

8. Education of all children, from the moment they are old enough, in national establishments at national cost. Education and production together.
9. Construction, on public lands, of great palaces as communal dwellings for associated groups of citizens engaged in both industry and agriculture and combining in their way of life the advantages of urban and rural conditions while avoiding the one-sidedness and drawbacks of each.
10. Destruction of all unhealthy and shoddy-built dwellings in urban districts.
11. Equal inheritance rights for children born in and out of wedlock.
12. Concentration of all transport in the hands of the nation.

It is impossible, of course, to carry out all these measures at once. But one will always bring others in its wake. Once the first radical attack on private *property* has been launched, the *proletariat* will find itself forced to go ever further, to concentrate increasingly in the hands of the state all *capital*, all agriculture, all transport, all trade. All the foregoing measures are directed to this end; and they will become practicable and feasible, capable of producing their centralizing effects to precisely the degree that the *proletariat*, through its labour, multiplies the country's productive forces.

Finally, when all *capital*, all production, all exchange have been brought together in the hands of the nation, private *property* will disappear of its own accord, money will become superfluous, and production will expand and attitudes will change such that society will be able to slough off whatever of its old economic habits may remain.

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Will it be possible for this revolution to take place in one country alone?

No. By creating the world market, big industry has already brought all the peoples of the Earth into such close relation with one another that none is independent of what happens to the others.

Further, it has co-ordinated the social development of all major Western countries to such an extent that, in all of them, *bourgeoisie* and *proletariat* have become the decisive classes, and the struggle between them the great struggle of the day. It follows that the *communist* revolution will not merely be a national phenomenon but must take place simultaneously in all major *capitalist* countries.

It will develop in each of these countries more or less rapidly, according as one country or the other has a more developed industry, greater wealth, a more significant mass of productive forces. It will have a powerful impact on the other countries of the world, and will radically alter the course of development which they have followed up to now, while greatly stepping up its pace.

It is a universal revolution and will, accordingly, have a universal range.

This is not to say, of course, that revolutions in individual countries are doomed to failure unless immediately followed throughout the entire world – indeed this would be impossible, for as mentioned *capitalism* develops at different rates in every country thus every country will reach the necessary conditions for revolution at different times, which also holds true for the rate at which any *socialist* state (that is, a *dictatorship of the proletariat* in the process of developing *communism*) will fulfil the revolutionary course outlined above.

capitalism as a global system will only be abolished for good when revolution sees global success, but it will be fought back and dismantled piece-by-piece in every state where the *proletariat* seize power and work to build *communism*.

As *capitalism* developed through the 19th century and on into the 20th, it expanded to the stage of *imperialism*, in which Western *capitalist* monopolies move the foundational industries such as raw materials extraction and factory production to countries (primarily in the global south and east) whose economies have been devastated by the growth of *capitalism* (and which are kept in economic subjugation by tactics such as predatory international loans from the wealthy Western governments and the private investment banks which are now intertwined with them), taking advantage of these countries' lower labour costs. This creates a core of *imperialist* nations, countries such as Britain, France, Germany and the USA in which the *bourgeoisie* have not only had the longest time to develop and cement their power but whose power is inflated further still by the mechanisms of *imperialism*, and in which their economies are largely dependent on the labour of *proletarians* in the periphery (the countries commonly referred to as "third world").

The *proletarians* of the periphery produce the bulk of the wealth of the modern global *capitalist* economy, and their countries' economic subjugation means that they largely face harsher living conditions than even the most impoverished *proletarians* of the *imperial core*, while even the *bourgeoisie* of the periphery are in a weaker and more precarious position due to the overarching economic control of the *imperialists*, meaning that the nations of the periphery are vastly closer to revolutionary situations than any of the *imperial core* – indeed, the world has yet to see a successful revolution in a fully *capitalist* nation, and most have taken place in nations under colonial occupation. For this reason, most *Communists* recognise that successful revolution in Western countries will only be possible once they can no longer rely on the spoils of *imperialism*, and as such it is the primary task of Western *Communists* to oppose *imperialism* within their own countries and act in solidarity with the *Communists* of those countries which theirs oppresses.

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What will be the consequences of the abolition of private property?

Society will take all forces of production and means of commerce, as well as the exchange and distribution of products, out of the hands of private *capitalists* and will manage them in accordance with a plan based on the availability of resources and the needs of the whole society. In this way, most important of all, the evil consequences which are now associated with the conduct of big industry will be abolished.

There will be no more commercial crises; the expanded production, which for the present order of society is overproduction and thus a prevailing cause of misery, will then be insufficient and in need of being expanded much further. Instead of generating misery, overproduction will reach beyond the elementary requirements of society to assure the satisfaction of the needs of all; it will create new needs and, at the same time, the means of satisfying them. It will become the condition of, and the stimulus to, new progress, which will no longer throw the whole social order into confusion, as progress has always done in the past. The vast expansion and development of industry, freed from the pressure of private *property*, will provide enough to satisfy the needs of everyone.

The same will be true of agriculture, which also suffers from the pressure of private *property* and is held back by the division of privately owned land into small parcels. Here,

existing improvements and scientific procedures will be put into practice, with a resulting leap forward which will ensure society has all the products it needs.

In this way, such an abundance of goods will be able to satisfy the needs of everyone.

The division of society into different, mutually hostile classes will then become unnecessary, and indeed intolerable. The existence of classes originated in the division of labour, and the division of labour, as it has been known up to now, will completely disappear. For mechanical and chemical processes are not enough to bring industrial and agricultural production up to the level we have described; the capacities of the people who make use of these processes must expand just as much.

Just as the peasants and manufacturing workers of past centuries changed their whole way of life and became quite different people when they were drawn into big industry, in the same way, communal control over production by society as a whole, and the resulting new development, will both require an entirely different kind of human material.

People will no longer be, as they are today, subordinated to a single branch of production, bound to it, exploited by it; they will no longer develop *one* of their faculties at the expense of all others; they will no longer know only *one* branch, or one branch of a single branch, of production as a whole. Even industry as it is today is finding such people less and less useful.

Industry controlled by society as a whole, and operated according to a plan, presupposes well-rounded human beings, their faculties developed in balanced fashion, able to see the system of production in its entirety.

The form of the division of labour which makes one person a peasant, another a cobbler, a third a factory worker, a fourth a stock-market operator, has already been undermined by machinery and will completely disappear. Education will enable young people quickly to familiarize themselves with the whole system of production and to pass from one branch of production to another in response to the needs of society or their own inclinations. It will, therefore, free them from the one-sided character which the present-day division of labour forces upon every individual. *Communist* society will, in this way, make it possible for its members to put their comprehensively developed faculties to full use. But, when this happens, classes will necessarily disappear. Society organized on a *communist* basis is incompatible with the existence of classes, and that the very building of such a society provides the means of abolishing class differences.

A corollary of this is that the difference between city and country is destined to disappear. The management of agriculture and industry by the same people rather than by two different classes of people is, if only for purely material reasons, a necessary condition of *communist* association. The dispersal of the agricultural population on the land, alongside the crowding of the industrial population into cities, is a condition which corresponds to an undeveloped state of both agriculture and industry and can already be felt as an obstacle to further development.

The general co-operation of all members of society for the purpose of planned use of the forces of production, the expansion of production to the point where it will satisfy the needs of all, the abolition of a situation in which the needs of some are satisfied at the expense of the needs of others, the complete liquidation of classes and their conflicts, the rounded development of the capacities of all members of society through the elimination of the

present division of labour, through industrial education, through engaging in varying activities, through the participation by all in the enjoyments produced by all, through the combination of city and country – these are the main consequences of the abolition of private *property*.

— 21 —

What will be the influence of communist society on the family?

It will transform the relations between individuals into a purely private matter which concerns only the persons involved and into which society has no reason to intervene. It can do this since it does away with private *property* and educates children on a communal basis, and in this way removes the two bases of traditional marriage – the dependence rooted in private *property*, of the women on the man, and of the children on the parents.

— 22 —

What will be the attitude of communism to existing nationalities?

Just as class distinctions must disappear through the abolition of their basis of private *property*, ideas of nationality will dissolve as the people live equally amongst each other as a singular community.

— 23 —

What will be its attitude to existing religions?

All religions so far have been the expression of historical stages of development of individual peoples or groups of peoples, meeting the needs of their given time. In a *communist* society, organised religions as powerful political institutions and sources of representation will be rendered unnecessary as political power is dispersed into the hands of the people, and people's needs for connection with their local community and public space will be supported and provided for.

— 24 —

How do communists differ from socialists?

The so-called *socialists* are divided into three categories.

Reactionary Socialists:

The first category consists of adherents of a feudal and patriarchal society which has already been destroyed, by big industry and world trade and their creation, bourgeois society. This category concludes, from the evils of existing society, that feudal and patriarchal society must be restored because it was free of such evils. In one way or another, all their proposals are directed to this end.

This category of *reactionary socialists*, for all their seeming partisanship and their scolding tears for the misery of the *proletariat*, is nevertheless energetically opposed by the *communists* for the following reasons:

1. It strives for something which is entirely impossible.
2. It seeks to establish the rule of the aristocracy, the guildmasters, the small producers, and their retinue of absolute or feudal monarchs, officials, soldiers, and priests – a society which was, to be sure, free of the evils of present-day society but which brought it at least as many evils without even offering to the oppressed workers the prospect of liberation through a *communist* revolution.

3. As soon as the *proletariat* becomes revolutionary and *communist*, these reactionary socialists show their true colours by immediately making common cause with the *bourgeoisie* against the *proletarians*.

Bourgeois Socialists:

The second category consists of adherents of present-day society who have been frightened for its future by the evils it inevitably creates. What they want, therefore, is to maintain this society while getting rid of the evils which are an inherent part of it.

To this end, some propose mere welfare measures – while others come forward with grandiose systems of reform which, under the pretence of re-organizing society, are in fact intended to preserve the foundations, and hence the life, of existing society.

Communists must unremittingly struggle against these *bourgeois socialists*, because they work for the enemies of *communists* and protect the society which *communists* aim to overthrow.

Democratic Socialists:

Finally, the third category consists of *democratic socialists* who favour some of the same measures the *communists* advocate, as described in Question 18, not as part of the transition to *communism*, however, but as measures which they believe will be sufficient to abolish the misery and evils of present-day society.

These *democratic socialists* are either *proletarians* who are not yet sufficiently clear about the conditions of the liberation of their class, or they are representatives of the *petty bourgeoisie*, a class which, prior to the achievement of democracy and the *socialist* measures it gives rise to, has many interests in common with the *proletariat*.

It follows that, in moments of action, the *communists* will have to come to an understanding with these *democratic socialists*, and in general to follow as far as possible a common policy with them – provided that these *socialists* do not enter into the service of the ruling *bourgeoisie* and attack the *communists*.

It is clear that this form of co-operation in action does not exclude the discussion of differences.

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What is the attitude of the communists to the other modern political parties?

[Editor's note: in the original text, Engels answered this by discussing the specific parties & situations of note in the West at the time; rather than try to write a modern-day equivalent, I have tried to distil the generally applicable lessons from his analysis.]

Communists have a common cause & interest alongside parties that advance and promote the interests of the *proletariat* against the *bourgeoisie*, but only as far as their material activity and aims align. While some parties may work toward some socialist measures, any electoral party is ultimately – as we saw in question 11 – a *bourgeois* party in a *bourgeois* system, and so can never truly liberate the *proletariat*, at best painting over the cracks and flaws inherent to *capitalist* society and providing a marginally less oppressive face to *bourgeois* leadership. Therefore, while some parties and some situations might present opportunities and intentions worth supporting (for example, if an electoral party were to seek nationalisation of services or industry), that support should never be at the expense

of separately organising an explicitly *communist* party outside the *bourgeois* political establishment.

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If you have any questions, feel free to contact the editor at jhredstar@proton.me